



# GRAMPAW PETTIBONE

## Ad Libitum

After concluding an RO2N at a West Coast air station, an instructor and his student prepared for the return trip to their home base in Texas. They conducted a thorough briefing, preflighted their TF-9J, and became airborne at 2025.

The first leg of the return trip was filed IFR to El Paso International Airport with assigned flight level 370. Passing FL 250 in the climb, the high pressure pump warning light came on but was eliminated by reducing power from 100.5 to 100 per cent RPM. The remainder of the climb was made without incident. Level-off was accomplished to indicate Mach .85 with 5,500 pounds of fuel left.

Between Gila Bend and San Simon, a check in the cockpit (which was verified by Albuquerque Center) showed a ground speed of 600 knots. At this time, the instructor determined he was 1,300 pounds ahead of the fuel plan for that position. Over San Simon a request was made to Albuquerque Center to verify the existence of a 150-knot jet stream. The center reported that several west-bound commercial carriers had reported the existence of such winds. With this good news, the instructor tried unsuccessfully to contact Biggs AFB Metro for his home field weather, but Albuquerque Center came through and gave the requested weather as clear and 10. Required fuel was computed from El Paso to home and it was determined that a minimum of 2,400 pounds over El Paso would be adequate for the extended flight with 500 pounds remaining upon arrival.

The instructor directed the student pilot to initiate a request for change of flight plan estimating one hour en route from El Paso to home base, one and one half hours fuel on board with no alternate required. They were cleared as requested and the instructor conduct-

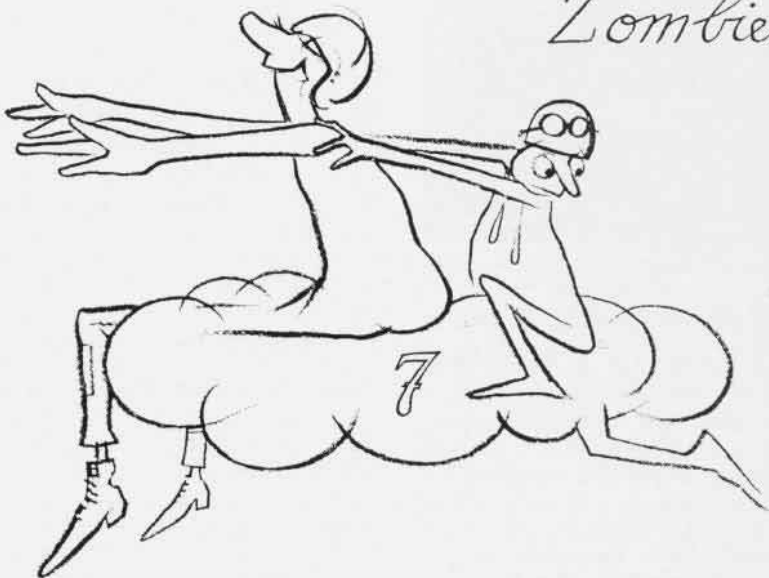


ed a detailed brief on procedures for idle penetration and low state ground controlled approach.

The flight passed El Paso with 2,400 pounds of fuel, ground speed 600 knots and indicating Mach .83. At Fort Stockton a request for a radar vector direct to home base was initiated and approved by Fort Worth. One hundred and fifty miles out from home base, the two-

some requested an en route descent (fuel state at this time was 1,000 pounds) which Houston Center approved and advised that destination weather was clear and ten miles in ground fog. The idle descent was commenced and while passing FL 240, they cancelled their IFR flight plan.

At approximately 50 miles out, at FL 200 with 600 pounds of fuel remaining, the tower advised this inbound that the field was IFR with 1/16th mile visibility in ground fog. The instructor asked for the tops of the fog bank and immediately declared an emergency. In turn, he requested a straight in to runway 13. He was advised that the duty was 35 and that no arresting gear was rigged on 13. After assuring the tower the arresting gear was not necessary, he contacted approach control and requested an emergency low fuel state GCA. Approach control advised that only ASR was available as the PAR was aligned with runway 35. The instructor *in extremis* accepted



*Zombies!*

the ASR and advised that he would delay lowering the gear. At six miles with 400 pounds of fuel and at 2,000 feet he was advised that his altitude should be 1,100 feet. The runway was in sight at this time; he continued the descent at 150 knots and lowered the gear and flaps. Entry into the fog occurred at 700 feet and they lost sight of the field.

One mile out at 300 feet vice 400 as advised by GCA, power was added to level off, but the aircraft continued to descend and contacted the ground in a slightly right-wing-down, nose-high attitude. Shortly after contact with the ground, the aircraft skidded and then commenced an easy slew to the right. The plane rolled, shedding the wings, left main mount and tail assembly before coming to rest in an upright position. Both occupants exited uninjured.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

# @ \* & " ! This is the proverbial straw that broke the camel's back.

Your old dad's been waitin' for this kind a stunt. There ain't no excuse nor enough room on this page to expend my wrath on it. I really don't see too much need to insult readers' intelligence by listing all the violations that this pair of throttle jockeys committed. I doubt that these two could convince anyone just what they were trying to prove but they did prove one thing: *Poor judgment will buy you nothin' but trouble.* These lads were downright lucky to walk away from this one. Maybe after this they'll remember, "Know thyself, for he is a fool of fools who deceives himself."

## Jumping Jackrabbits

After waiting four days for the weather to clear sufficiently to meet "test hop conditions," an A-4C pilot conducted a normal pre-flight and started his aircraft. Noting a malfunction in the fire warning circuit, he shut down and had a technician investigate the discrepancy. After repair was complete, the pilot started the aircraft, proceeded through a normal engine run-up, taxied out and took off.

Throughout the first part of the flight, all test checks were routinely performed and revealed only one discrepancy concerning power and temperature on manual fuel con-

trol. After completing the landing gear check (altitude 6,000 feet), the pilot added power and pulled up the gear to return to base.

At about 94%, the pilot noted a "violent vibration" in the aircraft and heard a loud "rapping and grinding" noise which appeared to come from behind. He re-set the power at 85-87% and called approach control to inform them of his "emergency." The air station tower answered his call and provided the GCA frequency to facilitate an immediate vector to the field. GCA located the A-4 about 20 miles from the field and gave him a steer to the base. The pilot noted that the vibration and noise continued spasmodically with the reduced power setting.

At approximately 12 miles out, the distressed driver executed a 360 to lose altitude. He continued communication with GCA, electing to make a high straight in approach vice a normal GCA.

The pilot had difficulty sighting the field but finally picked it up at about two miles in his one o'clock position. At this time, altitude was 2,000 feet and airspeed 150 knots. Intent on getting down ASAP, he elected to land on the nearest available runway (opposite the duty with a 10K tail wind) and engage the Morest. The GCA controller informed the pilot that the Morest was rigged but that he was to land long with hook up so as to miss the E-14 gear at his approach end.

Coming over the approach end, he realized he was high and fast, pushed the nose over steeply, and flared before touching down about 2,000 feet down the runway. As he touched down, the pilot brought the throttle back to idle, slapped the hook handle down, only to have it spring back up; and again

slapped it down to stay. The A-4 bounced and missed the Morest. The pilot felt sure that he would be able to take the E-14 at the far end and transmitted this to his GCA controller. (The E-14 was not rigged.)

As the plane continued down the runway, the pilot applied gentle braking pressure, still assuming the E-14 gear was rigged for him. Passing the gear and onto the overrun, thoughts of taking it around and ejection were contemplated but overruled. He decided to hold on and ride it out.

The plane continued past 622 feet of overrun, skidded over an embankment, and penetrated two chain link fences before coming to rest. The pilot, slightly injured, was helped from the cockpit by the helo crewmen and taken to the dispensary. The engine continued to run at idle for 30 minutes despite attempts to shut it down.



**Grampaw Pettibone says:**

Jumpin' Jehosaphat! How unglorious an end can an A-4 come to?

There's no doubt this lad received a shot of adrenalin right under the shark chaser, but he let panic override sound reasoning and good judgment. "Violent vibrations, rapping and grinding" ain't normal, but there wasn't a gauge on the instrument panel that diagnosed engine troubles. Heading for the barn under these circumstances is the right decision, but landing downwind from a high and fast approach ain't!

Why this lad committed himself so early is beyond me. The weather wasn't CAVU, but had he maintained his highest VFR altitude under the 4,500-foot overcast and executed a precautionary approach, Old Gramps feels certain this youngster could have fastened that flappin' canvas fuze panel cover back up in the nose wheel well after he returned to the line.